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## Merry-Go-Round

## Search for a Hero



Jack Anderson

ONE OF THE unsung heroes of the Nazi holocaust, a man who saved more than 10,000 Jews from the concentration camps, may himself still be a prisoner of the Soviet archipelago. A 30-year international effort to learn the fate of this World War II crusader has been rebuffed by the Kremlin.

Raou' Wallenberg, a distinguished Swedish diplomat and scion of a wealthy Stockholm family, organized a campaign to save the lives of thousands of Jews who were to be deported to Nazi death factories from Budapest, Hungary.

The young diplomat invented a "protective passport" with the triple-crown seal of the Swedish king, which put thousands of Jews under the wing of the Swedish government.

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THEN, using little more than his wit and diplomatic bluff, Wallenberg obtained housing for his Jewish charges inside Budapest. When anti-Semites tried to attack the refuge, they were confronted by Wallenberg and his friends who threatened international retaliation if the Jews were harmed.

Eventually, an anti-Semitic band known as the Arrow Cross overthrew the Hungarian government and moved upon Wallenberg's community. The Arrow Cross leader, Ferenc Szalasi, consented to the Nazi's demands that the Jews be rounded up as slave labor.

A forced march to Austria was ordered.

Wallenberg and his aides traveled the highway daily, intercepting the death march and flushing diplomatic papers. They managed to save the lives of hundreds of victims.

Soviet soldiers finally closed in on Budapest. But instead of welcoming Wallenberg as a hero, the Soviets seized him and shipped him off to Russia. He became a "non-person," in one of the Kremlin's nameless penal institutions.

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AT FIRST, the Soviets denied that they had abducted the Swedish diplomat. But the denial was proven to be false, so Soviet officials said Wallenberg had been taken captive, and had died in July 1947 in Soviet custody.

But the death certificate the Soviets produced as evidence was suspect, and Soviet prisoners continued to whisper to outside sources that Wallenberg had been sighted alive — first in prison camps, then in psychiatric hospitals.

Famed Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, calling Wallenberg "one of the greatest benefactors of our century," told us that he has initiated a new investigation into Wallenberg's disappearance with sources in Spain. Wallenberg's 83-year-old mother, Maj von Dardel, is also organizing an international campaign to solve the mystery of her son's fate.

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